

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2656

As Reported By House Committee On:
Technology, Telecommunications & Energy

Title: An act relating to addressing health problems that significantly increase energy needs.

Brief Description: Reducing energy costs for customers that have significant energy needs due to serious health problems.

Sponsors: Representatives Kagi, Benson, Cody, Regala, Edmonds, Edwards, Schual-Berke, Murray, Kessler, Conway, Lovick and O'Brien.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Technology, Telecommunications & Energy: 2/1/00, 2/4/00 [DP].

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Offers a tax credit to companies that offer reduced rates to temperature sensitive persons.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS & ENERGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Crouse, Republican Co-Chair; Poulsen, Democratic Co-Chair; Ruderman, Democratic Vice Chair; Bush; Cooper; Delvin; Kastama; McDonald; Morris; Reardon and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives DeBolt, Republican Vice Chair and Thomas.

Staff: Julia Harmatz (786-7135).

Background:

Persons with certain medical conditions have a need to live in environments with warm temperatures. The warm temperature may help to prevent the worsening of

such health conditions. Such persons are deemed "temperature sensitive." Temperature sensitive persons can include those on life support equipment, paraplegic, quadriplegic, with Scleroderma, or compromised immune systems.

Summary of Bill:

Intent Section

This bill states that the intent of the Legislature is to encourage light, power, and gas distribution companies to offer discounts on heating costs to temperature sensitive patients by providing a tax credit to the company.

Application Process

The temperature sensitive person must submit an application to the Department of Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED) to receive a discount on heating costs. The CTED will prescribe the form of application. The application must contain a statement from a physician who certifies that the person is temperature sensitive with a qualifying condition.

Tax Credit

The CTED will send the approved application to the business and the business may receive a tax credit for the payment reduction. The payment reduction will not be more than 50 percent of the amount owed to the business for services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Energy companies have supported other tax credit programs. Heat helps arrest the progress of many medical conditions. California offers a similar program. Assistance from the state and the local energy companies in the form of reduced energy rates, or a special program such as Snohomish County, would help to keep our families from having to make the daily choice between groceries, medications and warmth, and from facing the looming possibility of bankruptcy.

Testimony Against: Administratively difficult to manage. Most coops and mutuals have good programs. There is a need, but a tax credit may not be the best way to handle this.

Testified: (Support) Patricia Lott, Scleroderma Foundation; Kirstin Wallin, Scleroderma Foundation; and Aaron Jones, Washington Electric Cooperatives Association.

(Opposed) Kathleen Collins, PacifiCorp.